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Identical letters dated 31 May 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, and in reference to the monthly Security Council briefing on the situation in the Middle East held on 25 May 2016, I should like to draw attention to the following:

- The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic strenuously objects to and deplores the failure at the above-mentioned briefing by Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, to address conditions in the occupied Syrian Golan. He also failed to highlight the position of the United Nations on the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan as set forth in the relevant United Nations resolutions, notably Security Council resolution 497 (1981). Furthermore, he did not address ongoing Israeli violations and illegal activities in the occupied Syrian Golan, even though those issues are at the heart of the item under discussion and an integral part of his mandate as Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

- It is common knowledge that the item the situation in the Middle East has historically been reserved for considering ways of enforcing United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions calling for an end to the Israeli occupation of Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan, and a withdrawal to the line of 4 June 1967, as well as resolutions on ending Israeli violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law, in order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region in accordance with the recognized terms of reference.

- Mr. Mladenov overstepped his mandate when he stated at the aforementioned briefing that the Council would be briefed separately on Syria later that same week. Matters relating to the crisis in Syria scheduled to be discussed by the Security Council at a later date fall under other mandates. Therefore, for Mr. Mladenov to make such a remark is, in principle, a violation of his mandate and evinces flagrant disregard for the terms of reference established for this item by the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

- In dozens of official letters and bilateral meetings with Secretariat officials, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has warned the Secretariat of the

danger of ignoring the situation in the occupied Syrian Golan. We are surprised, then, that at the aforementioned briefing, the Secretariat has again chosen to ignore Israel's refusal to implement internationally recognized resolutions and withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967. We are also surprised that the Secretariat ignored such ongoing Israeli violations and acts of aggression as the building of settlements, the confiscation of land and the theft of natural resources in the occupied Syrian Golan, and repressive Israeli policies such as arbitrary arrest and sham trials against our people there. Additionally, on 17 April 2016, the Prime Minister of the Israeli occupation Government held a cabinet meeting in the occupied Syrian Golan that was accompanied by provocative assertions by Israeli officials about the Golan being an integral part of Israel. That was a blatant violation of internationally recognized resolutions, in particular Security Council resolution 497 (1981). Also, we would have expected the members of the Security Council to be briefed on the assistance and support provided to terrorist groups in the area of separation in the Golan by the Israeli occupation forces, who have transported injured terrorists from the line of separation to Israeli hospitals for treatment and then returned them to Syria across that same line to resume their terrorist activities. Such practices are not only a flagrant violation of the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces (1974), the mandate of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and international law, but also endanger the lives and undermine the work of UNDOF personnel. Indeed, the terrorist groups have abducted UNDOF peacekeepers on several occasions.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic calls on the Secretariat to include the situation in the occupied Syrian Golan in future monthly briefings on the situation in the Middle East, and calls for implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated to the members of the Security Council and issued as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat

I. Introduction

1. In adopting its resolution 2253 (2015) on 17 December 2015, the Security Council expressed its determination to address the threat posed to international peace and security by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da'esh) and associated individuals and groups, as well as the importance of cutting off its access to funds and preventing it from planning and facilitating attacks. In paragraph 97 of resolution 2253 (2015), the Council requested that I provide an initial strategic-level report, followed by updates every four months thereafter, that demonstrates and reflects the gravity of the aforementioned threat, including the threats posed by foreign terrorist fighters joining ISIL and associated groups and entities; the sources of financing of those groups, including through illicit trade in oil, antiquities and other natural resources; and their planning and facilitation of attacks. The Council also requested that the report reflect the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat.

2. In my initial report (S/2016/92), issued on 29 January 2016, I addressed the areas identified by the Council and set out recommendations for strengthening the capacities of Member States to mitigate the threat posed by ISIL, as well as the ways in which the United Nations could support those efforts.

3. The present report was prepared with the input of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1526 (2004) concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) regarding the gravity of the threat posed by ISIL and its geographical evolution, and in close collaboration with the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre and other relevant United Nations actors and international organizations. It provides an update on the gravity of the threat posed by ISIL and associated groups and entities, as well as on ISIL funding sources. It highlights the efforts and progress of Member States in implementing related counter-terrorism measures in a number of thematic areas, and the risks posed by foreign terrorist fighters who return to their home States or travel

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to other States. It also considers the presence and influence of ISIL outside Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, notably in Afghanistan, Libya and South-East Asia; the use of information and communications technology (ICT) by ISIL; the issue of conflict-related sexual violence; and the range of technical assistance and capacity-building efforts undertaken by the United Nations and its partners.

II. The gravity of the threat

A. The threat posed by ISIL and associated groups and entities

4. The global threat emanating from ISIL remains high and continues to diversify. Since my initial report, the continued military pressure exerted in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic by international coalition forces has led to serious military setbacks for ISIL. However, even though the territorial expansion of ISIL in both States has been halted and, in part reversed over recent months, many Member States have noted that ISIL is not yet strategically and irreversibly weakened. Nevertheless, several Member States report a marked increase in the rate of returnees from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. Furthermore, information received from Member States points to recent discussions inside the core ISIL leadership concerning the group's future strategy. Although the discussions do not yet appear to have led to a serious disruption in the internal cohesion of the core leadership, this development should be further monitored.

5. Several Member States have stated that the core leadership of ISIL is seeking to elevate the role of its affiliates. In addition, recent international attacks perpetrated by members of ISIL demonstrate that the terrorist group is now moving into a new phase, with the increased risk that well-prepared and centrally directed attacks on international civilian targets may become a more frequent occurrence. In the past six months alone, ISIL has carried out, inspired, or claimed responsibility for, terrorist attacks in Bangladesh, Belgium, Egypt, France, Germany, Indonesia, Lebanon, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Turkey and the United States of America. The attacks have killed over 500 individuals and injured hundreds more. The list does not include attacks and fighting in conflict zones inside Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic or Yemen. ISIL thus continues to pose a significant global terrorist threat.

6. The attacks in Paris in November 2015 and in Brussels in March 2016 demonstrate the ability of ISIL to mount complex, multi-wave attacks. National law enforcement agencies continue to investigate those attacks, but it is already clear that they were coordinated by foreign terrorist fighters who had returned to Europe from ISIL-held territory in the Syrian Arab Republic. To some extent, these cells received direction from the ISIL leadership and were supported and facilitated by a range of individuals and groups with pre-existing records of involvement in criminality (including Al-Qaida-affiliated terrorist groups). This demonstrates the ability of ISIL returnees to quickly link up and draw on the support of established radical networks and supporters of Al-Qaida and thereby enhance their newly acquired terrorism skills with local knowledge and support.

7. Finally, continuing pressure on ISIL in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic also increases the likelihood that the terrorist group may try to move funds to affiliates

outside the immediate current conflict zone. Initial reports received from Member States indicate that this may already be occurring.

8. All of these factors demonstrate the crucial role played by States bordering the territories under ISIL control in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic in efforts to sustainably undermine the terrorist group's capacities. Continued direct access of the terrorist group to international borders remains a major area of concern. Several Member States highlight significant challenges in this regard. A worrying factor is that no Member State has reported that ISIL is short on, or lacks, arms or ammunition. Thus, in addition to risks connected with the outflow of returnees and funds from ISIL through Member States of the region, the potential inflow of arms and ammunition directly or indirectly to ISIL remains a serious concern.

B. ISIL funding sources

9. For the first time since the declaration of its so-called "caliphate" in June 2014, the ISIL core is under financial pressure. This was notably exemplified by the official announcement of ISIL, in late 2015, of a 50 per cent reduction in the salaries of fighters in Raqqah, Syrian Arab Republic.[1] Although the proportions have changed, the sources of ISIL revenue have not altered significantly since my initial report. ISIL continues to rely on "taxation" and extortion, as well as on revenue from energy resources. However, according to several Member States, ISIL oil production and refining, and thus its oil revenues, have been diminished as a result of international airstrikes. Furthermore, the decision of the Government of Iraq to cut off salary payments to employees living within ISIL-controlled territory in Iraq has, according to one Member State, cut the flow of funds into ISIL-controlled territory by the equivalent of $2 billion per year, and has therefore significantly curbed ISIL opportunities to levy "taxes".

10. Member States estimate that ISIL oil production has fallen by between 30 and 50 per cent as a result of the above-mentioned factors. However, the Monitoring Team notes that there may also be a "balloon effect": as pressure is applied to one income stream, ISIL may step up its efforts to identify income from other sources (see S/2015/739). Member States have reported that ISIL has been attempting to compensate for the loss in oil revenues by intensifying efforts at "taxation"/extortion (for example, increasing the cost of certain permits and escalating the imposition of "fines"). According to one State, ISIL has been creating new "taxes" and increasing the rate of existing "taxes".

11. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) reports that, because ISIL has not conquered new territory in Iraq for some time, its ability to loot and sell fresh resources, assets or antiquities has been diminished. It is not clear how much revenue ISIL earns from antiquities smuggling, but this practice remains

[1] The decrease in the salaries of foreign terrorist fighters is likely to have a negative effect on ISIL recruitment efforts. Member States have previously reported to the Monitoring Team that some of these fighters were motivated to join ISIL by the promise of money and free social services (see S/2015/358). As a result, would-be foreign terrorist fighters may choose to stay at home, and those already in conflict zones may return, thus potentially becoming involved in planning attacks at home. Nonetheless, according to one Member State, ISIL still pays more than other groups operating in the conflict zone.

a source of income.[2] Since my initial report, Western European law enforcement agencies have initiated investigations into related smuggling activities, including two specific investigations involving the private sector. International and regional organizations have also highlighted the potential risks to Libyan and Yemeni cultural artefacts and the risk that the looting and selling of such artefacts may become a funding stream for listed terrorist groups.

12. As noted above, owing to the increased pressure on ISIL finances in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, there is an increased risk that ISIL will attempt to exploit additional revenue-generating activities. The international community must therefore remain alert to attempts by ISIL to further diversify its revenue streams or expand relatively minor streams. For example, ISIL may seek outside donations (which have thus far represented a relatively small proportion of the terrorist group's funding) or intensify its efforts to obtain international hostages for ransom. As previously reported by the Monitoring Team, ISIL reaped significant rewards from the ransoming of international hostages in 2014 (see S/2014/770 and S/2014/815). Its income from kidnapping fell in 2015 from 2014 levels. If ISIL once again seeks ransoms for international hostages, instead of cynically using them as propaganda in gruesome execution videos, this would be a further indication of the increasing financial pressure faced by the terrorist group.

13. In view of the ongoing military strikes against ISIL-controlled oil fields and related infrastructure and against the ability of ISIL to refine oil efficiently, there is a heightened risk that it will attempt to obtain the necessary spare parts and equipment to revitalize its ability to profit from hydrocarbon resources. It is therefore crucial that the necessary compliance procedures be put in place to prevent ISIL from obtaining replacement equipment and parts needed to repair destroyed oil field infrastructure and refining equipment (see S/2016/213). Some Member States have been working to identify a list of equipment and spare parts that ISIL may be trying to acquire, with a view to sharing the list with business sector entities so that those entities can more effectively target their compliance procedures.

14. As ISIL comes under continued pressure in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic (including through military measures targeting cash storage sites), it is likely that it will attempt to move funds internationally and to convert local currency into currency or commodities, such as gold, which can be more easily transferred and used internationally. Money-service businesses, *hawala* exchange houses and other informal transfer systems remain vulnerable to abuse, but further attention should also be given to new payment methods, such as prepaid cards and virtual currencies. ISIL continues, nonetheless, to move funds through cash smuggling. Formal banking channels should also not be overlooked.

15. Member States, including Iraq, have already taken significant measures to limit the ability of ISIL to access the financial sector.[3] However, continued vigilance must be maintained in this area, particularly in Member States bordering ISIL-controlled territory. Vigilance is essential not only to prevent ISIL from being able to maintain funds abroad but also to prevent it from distributing funds to its affiliates and facilitating attacks around the world. As noted in my initial report, the

[2] ISIL issues, and charges for, "permits" authorizing looting and "taxes" the antiquities excavated and smuggled out of its territory (see S/2015/739).

[3] For example, the Central Bank of Iraq published a list of over 100 exchange houses that are banned from participating in Central Bank United States currency auctions (see S/2016/213).

proliferation of ISIL affiliates and of pledges of loyalty to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi over the past two years demonstrates the global reach and ambitions of ISIL.

16. Some ISIL affiliates are purpose-built, but others have been created by the rebranding of existing terrorist groups. Several States have emphasized in their assessments that some of the pledges of loyalty from existing terrorist groups to ISIL represent an opportunistic effort to obtain support, including financial support, from the well-funded ISIL core. According to Member States, ISIL has provided funding, including "start-up" capital, to its affiliates, including in North Africa and Afghanistan. According to one Member State, the ISIL core is using its "province" in Libya as a financial hub for the funnelling of money to other terrorist groups. Moreover, at least some of the international attacks carried out by ISIL cells have been funded in part by money raised in the conflict zone.[4] The "soft target" attacks perpetrated by ISIL internationally are relatively inexpensive and can, in many cases, be funded through local sources, such as the misappropriation of welfare benefits and petty crime. However, the cost of starting up, maintaining and providing long-term support for an affiliate is much higher. The provision of funds by ISIL to its affiliates and networks therefore remains a major concern.

17. Last, ISIL finances in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic cannot be targeted in isolation. Libya, too, is crisscrossed by smuggling routes, and ISIL is also able to "tax" economic or smuggling activity in Libya (see S/2015/891). Thus, the expansion and consolidation of territory increase opportunities for financing. Thus far, there is no indication that any ISIL affiliate is funding the terrorist group's core. However, this is another area in which vigilance is necessary, lest any ISIL affiliate develops sufficient revenue sources to financially support the core.

C. Foreign terrorist fighters joining ISIL and associated groups and entities: planning and facilitation of attacks

18. Significant numbers of foreign terrorist fighters continue to travel from States around the world to join ISIL in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. One Member State reported that around 38,000 individuals may have attempted to travel to the region in the past few years. Several Member States estimate that ISIL currently commands a total of around 30,000 fighters in the region (this number includes Syrian and Iraqi citizens in addition to foreign terrorist fighters). Most foreign terrorist fighters currently with ISIL travel from North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia. Significant numbers have also travelled from Europe and South and South-East Asia. Information provided by Member States indicates that the flow continues. Even though the increase in the number of new foreign terrorist fighters travelling from some regions has slowed, the travel and attempted travel of new foreign terrorist fighters from other regions has increased. Countermeasures taken by States to detect and deter foreign terrorist fighters, and increased controls at the borders of Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, may be affecting the numbers of such fighters able to join ISIL.

19. Determined foreign terrorist fighters who are aware of these controls are skilled at concealing their intention to travel, not least by using closed web forums

[4] According to one Member State, funds associated with the terrorist attacks in Lebanon were raised by ISIL in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.

and encrypted messaging services to engage with those facilitating their travel. They have been reported using forged or stolen identification documents and have also sought to conceal their travel to Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic by taking circuitous routes.

20. The profiles of individuals travelling to join ISIL in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic continue to vary and to suggest a wide range of motivations. Member States thus continue to face challenges in trying to identify potential foreign terrorist fighters. Some such fighters may already have a personal history in conflict zones; some may have ideological reasons for joining ISIL; and others may be motivated primarily by salary. The continued recruitment of women by ISIL and the involvement of children as fighters remain sources of concern.

21. According to some States, there is a renewed risk of terrorist attacks in South-East Asia. Although the numbers of foreign terrorist fighters from South-East Asia travelling to Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic to join ISIL are relatively small, in comparison with those from other regions, they still number in the hundreds. Leaders of several established South-East Asian groups (and some newer groups) have pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (see S/2015/441). The existence of a Malaysian/Indonesian military unit within ISIL, known as the Katibah Nusantara or Archipelago Group, further underscores the threat that South-East Asian veterans of the conflicts in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic may return with new skills.

22. An increasing number of foreign terrorist fighters are also returning to their home States. Some of these returnees leave conflict zones after becoming disillusioned with ISIL practices and with the conflict in which they were engaged. Others remain radicalized and retain the intent and capability, to conduct terrorist attacks in their country of origin or residence. Such fighters have been using practices such as "broken travel", using false or stolen travel documents, or hiding among migrant flows, in order to avoid detection. As was demonstrated in Paris and Brussels, these individuals form cells and networks. Many were previously involved in criminality and already have links to criminal organizations that can help provide access to weapons and explosives. They also return with battlefield skills, training in the use of explosives and an understanding of the practices of police and security agencies. As a consequence, they are difficult to detect.

23. Attacks carried out by such cells demonstrate an increased complexity and reflect an intention to attack multiple targets in waves, stretch police and security service resources, and cause civilian panic and high numbers of casualties. Some of these terrorist groups appear to be directed from abroad. Some returnees have also relocated to other areas of conflict in order to join ISIL affiliates; establish new affiliates in accordance with ISIL ideology; or establish funding channels within the framework of the ISIL strategy to expand its global footprint. Most significantly, several hundred foreign terrorist fighters have returned to Libya.

III. Evolving aspects of the threat

24. In the sections below, I highlight the emerging threat posed by ISIL in States other than Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, consider the use of ICT by ISIL and address the issue of conflict-related sexual violence.

A. Geographical evolution of the threat posed by ISIL

25. In view of the elevated presence of ISIL outside Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, the present report provides an examination of the main affiliates of ISIL, as well as regions in which there is an elevated risk that new ISIL affiliates will be established. Subsequent update reports, to be submitted pursuant to paragraph 97 of resolution 2253 (2015), will examine these issues in greater detail.

1. ISIL in Libya

26. After 18 months of presence in Libya, this branch of ISIL continues to be part of a deliberate strategy on the part of the ISIL core to expand outside Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. Member States note that some within the central ISIL leadership see Libya as a potential alternative theatre in view of the increased difficulties facing ISIL in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. In addition, ISIL has recognized that a foothold in Libya would enable it to build a hub for possible expansion in the wider Maghreb and Sahel regions and beyond. ISIL thus continues to take advantage of the political and security vacuum in Libya. Its Libyan branch has also benefitted from receiving guidance from the core ISIL leadership and from the extensive experience of ISIL with, and its knowledge of, inter alia, propaganda and the construction of improvised explosive devices.

27. Member States also indicate that ISIL in Libya supports other ISIL cells in the Maghreb (particularly in Tunisia, where this branch of the terrorist group has already provided support to ISIL-affiliated individuals). Continuous recruitment and facilitation activities in the region have also been reported. Several associated Maghreb-based cells have recently been dismantled by Member State security services.

28. ISIL in Libya has benefitted greatly from an inflow of new fighters since its inception. The ISIL core sent a group of around 800 Libyan fighters from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic back to Libya in order to reinforce ISIL activities in the country (S/2015/891, para. 21) and continues to attract fighters from the Maghreb, the Sahel, the Middle East, East Africa and Western States. Although the total number of foreign terrorist fighters in Libya is significantly lower than that in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, Member States estimate the ISIL fighting force (which is mainly composed of foreign terrorist fighters) to comprise between 3,000 and 5,000 fighters. According to Member States, Libya serves as a waypoint and sanctuary for ISIL returnees on their way back to their home or to third States. However, ISIL in Libya continues to be considered an "outsider" element by the local population and other Libyan factions (ibid., para. 8).

29. ISIL in Libya has gained control over territory in a relatively short time. Recent attacks have targeted the coastline east of Sirte (including oil facilities) to deny income to other groups and rival factions in the country. ISIL consistently attempts to expand its sphere of influence by attacking security checkpoints, inhabited areas and vital installations. However, it faces difficulties in operating and expanding outside its stronghold in Sirte, which continues to host most of the leadership of ISIL *in Libya. According* to information provided by Member States, ISIL controls various individual cells in Darnah, Ajdabiya and Benghazi, where military operations have succeeded in dislodging larger groups of ISIL fighters. Tripoli also continues to be home to ISIL cells. Finally, Member States report a

small ISIL presence in southern Libya, established to provide logistical support and training to incoming foreign terrorist fighters. On 19 February 2016, in Sabratha, ISIL in Libya suffered a significant setback when more than 40 such fighters, including many Tunisian fighters linked to high-profile attacks in Tunisia, were killed in an airstrike.

30. According to information provided by Member States, ISIL in Libya continues to be largely self-funded through "taxation" within and in the vicinity of Sirte. However, one Member State also reported the provision of funding from the ISIL core through emissaries. ISIL does not currently appear to earn income directly from exploiting Libya's crude oil resources.[5]

31. The continuing difficulties experienced by ISIL in Libya in consolidating its territory, building alliances and competing with other actors, including transnational smuggling networks in the region, have the potential to hinder the branch from gaining additional momentum in the coming months. Nevertheless, the presence of ISIL in Libya remains a risk factor. It will therefore be necessary to continue to monitor the terrorist group's operational capacities, the expansion of its influence in a local environment that is not necessarily favourable and the reactions of other terrorist groups in the Sahel and West Africa.

2. ISIL in Afghanistan

32. The leadership vacuum in the Taliban's "Islamic Emirate" following the death of Mullah Omar was filled in mid-2015 by the declaration of a new "amir al-muminin", Akhtar Mohammad Mansour, who implored Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi to refrain from extending his domain into Afghanistan. Because the new Taliban leader was contested (owing to his narrow tribal base, involvement in the narcotics trade and lavish lifestyle) a number of factions in the Afghan Taliban movement declared their support for ISIL. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, until that time a loyal affiliate of core Al-Qaida, also identified more with the so-called "caliphate" of ISIL and resisted the new leadership, despite the pledge of loyalty of A!-Qaida leader Aiman Muhammed Rabi al-Zawahiri' to Akhtar Mohammad Mansour in September 2015. Some members of ISIL in Afghanistan are former fighters of Tehrik-e Taliban in Pakistan. Both latter groups had been displaced from their previous sanctuary, in North Waziristan, Pakistan, to border areas inside Afghanistan. Only a handful of individuals with ISIL in Afghanistan have come directly from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.

33. The forces of Akhtar Mohammad Mansour defeated these new ISIL factions in South, South-East and West Afghanistan, postponing offensive operations in each territory against the Government of Afghanistan. As a result, the presence of ISIL in those areas went underground, but remains active. In 2015, ISIL was able to take control of the Achin, Deh Bala, Kot and Nazyan districts in Nangarhar Province, along the border with Pakistan. Following its decision to ban poppy cultivation in those districts, ISIL in Afghanistan was also attacked by local elites and strongmen involved in narcotics trafficking. In 2015, international counter-terrorism forces operating in Afghanistan began to target ISIL systematically. In the face of this opposition, ISIL tactically retreated from the main settled areas to the mountainous periphery alongside the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. In autumn 2015, ISIL was

[5] Information provided by Member States. See also S/2016/209 and S/2015/891.

estimated to have between 1,400 and 2,000 fighters in Nangarhar Province. By the first quarter of 2016, however, this force was estimated to consist of fewer than 1,000 fighters. Some former Taliban, who in 2014 had aligned themselves with ISIL, returned and pledged allegiance to former Taliban leader Akhtar Mohammad Mansour.

34. ISIL in Afghanistan has proved its ability to hold limited terrain and to conduct terrorist attacks in major cities beyond its core territory. Attacks using an improvised explosive device in Kabul targeted a Shia mosque, and a complex suicide attack in Jalalabad targeted the Pakistani Consulate. Attacks are also carried out in border areas inside Pakistan.

35. Following the destruction of the terrorist group's fixed FM radio station in February 2016, the terrorist group resumed broadcasts of its "Voice of the caliphate" from a mobile platform in an effort to avoid detection. The terrorist group has access to the Internet and continues to produce high-quality and frequent propaganda movies.

36. According to one Member State, a significant financial source for ISIL in Afghanistan is funds originating from ISIL in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. The funds are moved by money transfers routed through third States. These resources were sufficient for ISIL in Afghanistan to acquire a large portion of the opium harvest of the four districts in Nangarhar Province in the first quarter 2015 and are estimated to amount to several million dollars. According to several Member States, ISIL subsequently burned the poppy crop. This demonstrates that the terrorist group has sufficient financial assets in Afghanistan and does not currently need to rely on the narcotics trade to finance its operations in the country.

B. Use of information communications technology

1. Use of information communications technology platforms by ISIL

37. ICT is a key enabler for ISIL and plays an essential role in enabling ISIL and its affiliates to function, recruit and attack. The military and economic squeeze currently being effected on ISIL in the territories it controls, in particular Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, has not yet been translated into a similar reduction of its cyberpresence. The threat in this sector is significant, dynamic and evolving.

38. Although many ISIL accounts have been suspended in recent years, it has maintained a proactive response to sustain control over its propaganda on social networking sites. For instance, in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks at the Brussels airport in Zaventem and the Molenbeek metro station on 22 March 2016, several private pro-ISIL Telegram channels began coordinating an online propaganda campaign on Twitter by exploiting trending Brussels hashtags (for example, #Brussel #Brussels #Bruxelles #Brusselsattacks) and flooding them with ISIL propaganda, including videos.[6] Coordination by ISIL of social media campaigns through the use of proxy disseminators that propagate its virulent

[6] Just as they did following the 22 March attacks, pro-ISIL Telegram channels launched similar media campaigns aimed at exploiting social media postings and hashtags on Twitter (for example, #ParisIsBurning and #BostonMarathon) following the 13 November Paris attacks and the third anniversary of the Boston marathon bombing with ISIL supportive propaganda.

narrative — with or without the direction of the ISIL core — marks an evolution in its propaganda campaign.

39. There is continuing evidence of online sharing of instructional videos or materials, such as those on the planning and execution of terrorist attacks or the construction of improvised explosive devices (see S/2014/770, para. 19), and on the use of small arms and light weapons. Although such theoretical instructions usually require practical training and field exercises to be effective, sharing relevant materials online is easy and facilitates such activities. Recent reports suggest that terrorist organizations are also engaged in the online trafficking of weapons via social media and communication platforms in States that are either in or neighbouring the conflict zones in the Middle East.[7]

40. ISIL may currently lack technical capabilities for cyberattacks against critical infrastructures. However, the risk that ISIL will purchase attack tools from the "darknet" is real and developing. Data (in particular sensitive personal data of law enforcement personnel) is a key target for ISIL and its sympathizers. The so-called "caliphate cyber army" and other hacker groups that currently appear to be only sympathizers of ISIL could be recruited by ISIL as force multipliers.

2. Enhancing cooperation with private information and communications technology companies

41. Although States bear the primary responsibility for preventing and countering the threat posed by terrorist use of ICT, their success depends upon harnessing the knowledge, expertise and active support of relevant stakeholders such as the private sector and civil society. Online radicalization cannot be tackled by focusing exclusively on attempts to remove content or to restrict access to the Internet. The private sector — particularly the media and the technology sector — possesses a range of tools and resources that could be used to help Governments and civil society build resilience to radicalization. Often, grass-roots organizations lack the technical expertise to maintain and update websites and social media platforms designed to maximize the efficacy of counter-messaging initiatives. There remains considerable scope to develop online counter-narratives by further supporting grass-roots initiatives and working increasingly with the private sector.

42. Many leading ICT companies have measures in place to prevent the abuse of their platforms. Google and Facebook recently announced the launch of anti-radicalization campaigns to be conducted together with civil society organizations. In February 2016, Twitter announced that, since mid-2015, it had deleted more than 125,000 accounts linked to terrorists. On 20 May 2016, Microsoft announced that it was revising its approach to terrorist content online and its terms of use and would use the Consolidated United Nations Security Council Sanctions List to take down content. These companies are increasing their capacities to enforce their terms of use and allow users and Governments to flag content while also facilitating the dissemination of counter-messages by credible messengers.

43. Certain companies are recognizing the need to raise awareness of their operational guidelines for law enforcement officials seeking user records, particularly through the use of the emergency disclosure request process, data-

[7] See http://armamentresearch.com/small-arms-light-weapons-traded-via-social-media-platforms-in-libya/.

preservation requests and requests for basic subscriber information. The creation of a network of trusted and listed points of contact would facilitate cooperation between organizations committed to preventing terrorist use of the Internet.

C. Conflict-related sexual violence

44. Sexual violence continues to be used as a tactic of terrorism to increase the power, revenue and recruitment base of ISIL, as well as to shred the social fabric of targeted communities. As I noted in my recent report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2016/361) although the threat of sexual violence has been a "push" factor driving forced displacement of civilians, the offer of wives and sex slaves has been a strategic "pull" factor for the recruitment of men and boys, inducing both local youths and foreign fighters, to join ISIL ranks (ibid., paras. 19-22). ISIL describes the capture and enslavement of "infidel" women and children as an inevitable consequence of its conquest of new territory and seeks to regulate and codify sexual slavery. This reinforces the explicit justification of sexual enslavement.

45. The trafficking of women and girls remains a critical component of the financial flows to ISIL and its affiliates, which continue to exploit ICT to extort funds through the trafficking and sale of women. "Innovative" uses of communication platforms, such as through the use of private messaging applications, have allowed ISIL and its affiliates to secretly communicate through encrypted messaging and sell women and girls through an online bidding process.

46. There is a need to ensure accountability for sexual violence as part of United Nations counter-terrorism strategies. Sexual violence must be prosecuted as vigorously as terrorist acts. At its fifty-fifth session, the Committee Against Torture, adopting its concluding observations on Iraq (A/HRC/28/18), expressed concern that ISIL had instituted a pattern of sexual violence, slavery, abduction and human trafficking targeted at women and girls belonging to religious and ethnic minorities, and recommended that Iraq take measures to promote the protection of women and eliminate the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators. It is therefore important that there is a collective effort to preserve evidence of the violations committed by ISIL, including sexual violence.

47. States should continue to deepen their understanding of sexual violence as a tactic of terrorism and formally recognize victims of sexual violence as victims of terrorism in order to build counter-narratives and counter-strategies and pave the way for reparations and redress. States should also engage with traditional and religious leaders who can help to shift the shame and stigma of sexual violence from the victims to the perpetrators. This is vital to ensuring that extremists do not win the underlying battle of ideas. This includes negating attempts to legitimize rape on religious terms. The efforts of States to counter violent extremism must not compromise women's rights, but rather empower women as part of efforts to foster resilient families and communities, as called for in resolution 2178 (2014) on addressing the terrorist threat. Finally, States should ensure that their national legislation criminalizes the use of social media platforms and messaging applications to sell women and children.

IV. Updates on implementation by Member States of the relevant counter-terrorism resolutions

A. Criminal justice and legislation

48. The need to respond to the rapid evolution and escalation of the current terrorist threat, including the emergence of ISIL and its success in recruiting foreign terrorist fighters, has created additional legal counter-terrorism challenges. Member States continue to work to ensure that their legislation fully meets the requirements of resolution 2178 (2014) and facilitates an effective response to the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon (including addressing the full range of serious crimes committed during travel (in particular war crimes, crimes against humanity and gender-related crimes)) (A/HRC/28/18).

49. Currently, only around one third of the 77 Member States (see S/2015/975) identified as "most affected" by the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters have updated their legislation in response to resolution 2178 (2014). In many Member States, existing legislation falls short in several areas, including the need to prevent the travel of such fighters by comprehensively criminalizing preparatory or accessory acts. National legislation also remains overly broad or vague in many Member States and therefore risks providing inadequate protection of international human rights, humanitarian and refugee laws.

50. Member States also continue to work to strengthen their capacities to effectively investigate and prosecute complex terrorism-related cases and, in particular, cases related to foreign terrorist fighters. Collecting evidence in or from foreign terrorist fighter destination areas remains a serious challenge.

51. Several States report that a high proportion of their nationals suspected of returning from foreign terrorist fighter destination areas have either not met the threshold for prosecution or have received short prison sentences. Currently, only around half of the States most affected by the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters have developed and implemented prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies for returnees. The Madrid guiding principles on foreign terrorist fighters (S/2015/939, annex II),[8] in particular guiding principles 30-32, provide useful guidance in this field.[9]

[8] In a letter dated 15 December 2015, the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism submitted to the Council the guiding principles on foreign terrorist fighters (S/2015/939, annex II). The guiding principles were developed, with assistance from the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, by the Counter-Terrorism Committee at its special meeting on stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, which was held in Madrid on 27 and 28 July 2015. The guiding principles were identified by the Executive Directorate, acting in close cooperation with Member States, relevant United Nations bodies and relevant international and regional organizations, as well as civil society. They build upon existing good practices identified by States and international and regional organizations and forums to assist States in their efforts to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters.

[9] See also https://www.thegctf.org/documents/10162/140201/14Sept19_The+Hague-Marrakech+FTF+Memorandum.pdf.

B. International cooperation

52. Because terrorist networks and the travel of foreign terrorist fighters extend beyond one particular region, Member States of different parts of the world rely increasingly on international cooperation with States beyond their traditional bilateral and regional cooperation networks. However, the assessments of the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee show that there are numerous challenges associated with effective international cooperation in stemming the flow of such fighters, including delays in the provision of mutual legal assistance, procedural rigidities and lack of capacity.

53. The assessments of the Counter-Terrorism Committee also show that mutual legal assistance remains underutilized owing to the often lengthy and complicated procedures involved. Some Member States — including some of those most affected by the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters — have not yet designated an effective central authority to handle requests for MLA and extradition. Delays in procedures can result in the total loss of evidence. The guiding principles and the relevant publications of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)[10] provide useful guidance to enable Member States to effectively cooperate in criminal matters in order to bring terrorists to justice and stem the flow of such fighters.

54. The creation of judicial cooperation networks such as Eurojust, the European Judicial Network and the Southeast European Prosecutors Advisory Group has shown the utility of regional mechanisms in enhancing formal and informal cooperation. The designation of a network of contact points that are accessible 24 hours a day/7 days a week for cooperation can be an excellent tool in facilitating timely law enforcement exchange. A regional approach to updating legislation can also improve cooperation between Member States by facilitating legal consistency. The Council of Europe, for instance, recently concluded an Additional Protocol to its Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism, which provides for a harmonized approach to the implementation of resolution 2178 (2014).

C. Counter-financing of terrorism: countering the financing of ISIL and foreign terrorist fighters

55. Even though Member States have continued to make substantial progress in implementing the requirements of the relevant Security Council resolutions to prevent terrorist financing, they continue to face challenges in effectively implementing the new measures set forth in the relevant Council resolutions, which broaden the criminalization of terrorist financing to cover the financing of travel undertaken by foreign terrorist fighters. Several States have proposed that ISIL-linked individuals be designated in the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions List, and some have used the asset-freezing provisions of resolution 1373 (2001) to make national designations of individuals and entities linked to ISIL, including foreign terrorist fighters.

56. Member States of the Financial Action Task Force and the Task Force-style regional bodies are engaged in a review of the risks presented by ISIL and its

[10] See https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/terrorism/technical-assistance-tools.html.

affiliates with regard to terrorism financing, and particularly in identifying operational barriers to the sharing of financial information and to enhancing the contribution of counter-terrorism financing agencies in the prevention and investigation of terrorism cases.

57. States are using existing inter-agency mechanisms to enhance coordination on terrorism and terrorism-financing cases. Some States enable financial institutions to share information on accounts or customers among themselves, but these practices are generally limited. Some States have recently piloted terrorism-financing information-sharing platforms that allow for the exchange of confidential information at operational and policy levels between Government agencies and pre-authorized representatives of the private sector. Private-sector entities need also to receive additional information, not only to protect the international financial system but also to help to identify and dismantle terrorist networks through, for instance, the development of financial profiles. States also note that some financial products, such as prepaid cards, have an inherently higher vulnerability to abuse by terrorists. This was demonstrated following recent terrorist attacks connected with ISIL, including the Paris attacks of November 2015.

58. Physical transportation of cash across borders remains one of the preferred methods employed by ISIL for moving funds. States are increasingly aware of the need to strengthen controls on the cross-border movement of funds and goods, and some have recently taken steps to do so. Such steps include the completion of a national terrorism-financing risk assessment that identifies the various threats and risks, as well as countermeasures. For example, Member States of the Middle East and North Africa region neighbouring the conflict zone have identified significant risks associated with potential physical cross-border transportation of cash. However, the number of cases reported from 2014 to 2016 is very low, according to case statistics.

59. ISIL continues to rely on methods of transnational organized crime to circumvent the international counter-terrorism regime. Therefore, in addition to implementing the international counter-terrorism instruments and the United Nations sanctions regime, States are encouraged to utilize other relevant international instruments, such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime of 2000 and its Protocols. All these instruments can enhance measures taken by States to disrupt ISIL funding and can also be utilized to facilitate effective international and regional cooperation.

D. Law enforcement and border control

1. Law enforcement

60. Proactive and coordinated investigations are crucial to detecting terrorist recruitment, financing, travel and communications and thus to arresting suspects, deactivating terrorist cells and pre-empting terrorist activity. A number of States have successfully facilitated the collation, tracking and sharing of critical counter-terrorism intelligence with the use of centralized databases to which all counter-terrorism-mandated law enforcement agencies have access. In addition, national databases have been utilized to support regional and international information sharing. In some States, joint terrorism task forces play a lead role in coordinating

counter-terrorism investigations and bringing together national and international stakeholders in the process.

61. Bilateral and multilateral agreements continue to enhance the ability of States to counter the threat posed by ISIL and foreign terrorist fighters. States also benefit from participation in existing international and regional law enforcement bodies such as the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the European Police Office (Europol) and the Association of Heads of Police of the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEANAPOL).

62. Because of the success of ISIL and other terrorist organizations in recruiting new members through family and neighbourhood connections, the role played by law enforcement agencies in implementing preventive measures to tackle radicalization has taken on greater significance. Community policing and proactive intelligence work are two of the methods being used by some States to help to deter radicalization and halt the recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters. Although some States have already made good progress in strengthening internal coordination and real-time exchange of information, others are at an initial stage in developing their related counter-terrorism law enforcement systems and capacities. There remain shortfalls in the capacities of many States to create and effectively utilize the range of law enforcement measures and practices required to counter terrorism in general and the travel of foreign terrorist fighters, in particular.

2. Border control

63. The design and implementation of comprehensive border-management strategies continue to be challenging for many Member States, especially in the context of porous borders and the identification of departing or transiting foreign terrorist fighters. However, Member States have recognized that putting in place effective border control remains an essential aspect of countering terrorism and stemming the flow of such fighters. At official entry and exit points, key mechanisms include advance passenger information, passenger name records, biometric technology, and INTERPOL and national databases. Since the adoption of resolution 2178 (2014), the number of States using advance passenger information has increased from 51 to 56. Taking into account the high degree of complexity and resources required to develop a system for advance passenger information, however, it is likely that there will not be any appreciable upsurge in the number of States utilizing such systems for at least another four or five years. The recent recommendation of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Facilitation Panel to introduce an amendment to annex 9 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation ("Chicago Convention") to make the use of advance passenger information a binding international standard may speed progress in this area. It should be noted, however, that advance passenger information and/or passenger name records alone cannot prevent the travel of foreign terrorist fighters.

64. Some States have responded to the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters by increasing the number of official border points and/or the number of officials assigned to those points or by strengthening the technological capacity of existing border points. Some employ modern communication and surveillance methods to monitor border sections beyond official crossing points.

65. However, ISIL continues to use evolving, technologically efficient methods to facilitate the travel of foreign terrorist fighters (S/2016/92, para. 32). These include

online forums to disseminate information on ways for such fighters to avoid detection while crossing borders, using routes that will not raise suspicion, and to alert them to the particular elements that States look for when screening at borders.[11] To stem the flow of such fighters, States should develop and implement an additional range of flexible, complementary and coordinated border management measures, adapted to local conditions.

E. Countering recruitment and preventing/countering violent extremism

66. Member States continue to express deep concern over the abuse of the Internet and social media by ISIL and affiliates seeking to recruit new members and incite or glorify the commission of terrorist acts. During the thematic debates of the Security Council, held on 14 April 2016 and 11 May 2016 under the presidency of China and Egypt, respectively, Member States stressed the importance of effective measures to prohibit and counter such abuse, including through full implementation of resolution 1624 (2005) on the threat of incitement to commit acts of terrorism, as well as on the need to counter the narrative of terrorists. Member States also noted the need to ensure respect for international human rights obligations in undertaking related actions.

67. Member States are paying increased attention to the development of comprehensive approaches to countering recruitment and preventing and countering violent extremism, including by establishing partnerships with non-governmental actors. There is broad international recognition that effective strategies in this domain require the involvement of governmental actors not traditionally involved in counter-terrorism efforts, such as those concerned with education, social welfare, regional development, human rights and religious affairs. As stated in resolution 2178 (2014), it also requires engagement with relevant local communities and non-governmental actors and the empowerment of concerned civil society groups. Progress in this area has been slow. Care should be exercised in defining the respective roles of Governments and civil society actors. In the case of civil society and human rights defenders, emphasis should be placed on safeguarding the ability of non-governmental actors to operate in a secure environment and on fully respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedoms of thought, conscience, expression, religion, peaceful assembly and association.

F. Human rights

68. Measures taken to counter the threat posed by ISIL and other terrorist groups require States to contend with difficult issues with respect to their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights law. One concern is that the recent criminalization of certain conducts may not have been adequately considered and related policies may have been adopted in a reactive or hasty manner; States should therefore continue to ensure that proposed laws, policies and

[11] Although States have made efforts to have ISIL "manuals" removed from the Internet, excerpts from these remain widely accessible, including through re-posts on news media and social media sites. The guidance provided by ISIL can also complicate the criminal investigation of foreign terrorist fighters.

measures aimed at combatting ISIL and other terrorist organizations are subject to public debate and human rights review prior to adoption.

69. Measures taken to criminalize the attempted travel of foreign terrorist fighters to ISIL-controlled territories may also present more specific challenges. It may be problematic in certain cases to impose criminal liability prior to travel that is being undertaken to terrorist-controlled territory for the purpose of engaging in terrorist acts, when evidence of overt acts aimed towards that end may be scant. Prosecutions in some instances rely, in part, on acts of expression on the Internet and social media, and may implicate the rights to freedom of expression and conscience. In all cases, States need to ensure respect for the principle of legality and the presumption of innocence, and penalties attached to intended or attempted acts need to be proportionate.

70. Some States continue to implement measures to revoke travel documents, while others are considering measures such as the deprivation of nationality of suspected foreign terrorist fighters and of returnees. Due process and the goal of reducing statelessness must be taken into account in this regard. Likewise, States need to continue to take steps towards developing clear and objective criteria for the placement of individuals on so-called "watch lists" or "no-fly lists". In assembling such lists, States need to ensure that any personal data is stored and managed in accordance with the purpose behind its initial collection, without unduly interfering with the right to privacy.

71. Some States have shown a strong inclination to take suspected foreign terrorist fighters who are returnees into custody and detain them, including for purposes of prevention. However, the legal basis for such measures may not comply with the relevant human rights obligations. Some have considered alternatives to detention, such as house arrest or targeted surveillance, for those intending to travel, as well as for returnees. These measures, too, must comply with human rights obligations. There is concern that the increase in migrant flows, due in part to the impact of ISIL in conflict areas, has had a negative effect on the right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution. States should continue to uphold international refugee laws in their determination of the requests of asylum-seekers and to honour the principle of non-refoulement. States should also carefully consider the possible impact of their laws, policies and measures on the provision of humanitarian assistance to populations in need.

V. Range of United Nations efforts in supporting the efforts of Member States to counter the threat of ISIL

72. Since my initial report, United Nations entities have taken a number of steps, in accordance with their individual mandates and in partnership with the relevant international and regional organizations, to support the efforts of Member States to counter the threat of ISIL. The steps are set out below.

A. Foreign terrorist fighters

73. Acting in close consultation with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the Monitoring Team, the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task

Force has developed a capacity-building implementation plan for countering the flow of foreign terrorist fighters that addresses the priority recommendations of the Counter-Terrorism Committee as contained in its third report on the fighters (S/2015/975). The plan includes 37 project proposals addressing the full "life cycle" of the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon, including radicalization, travel and financing (and rehabilitation and reintegration, should they return).

74. On 21 January, the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force/United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre and representatives of the 12 submitting entities of the Task Force met with Council members and other interested Member States to brief them on the plan. The Centre will provide funding for seven of the projects, but significant donor resources will be required to fully implement the programme, as called for by the Council in its presidential statement S/PRST/2015/11. The Centre has further implemented its project to enhance understanding of foreign terrorist fighters, including the motivation of individuals joining terrorist groups in the Middle East, understanding key influences on their thinking and gaining insight into the reasons why they return to their home States.

75. Since my initial report, UNODC has continued to implement its five-year technical assistance programme on strengthening the legal regime against foreign terrorist fighters, which aims to strengthen national legal frameworks, train criminal justice and law enforcement officials through specialized thematic workshops, and enhance international, regional and subregional cooperation, including by setting up information-sharing platforms between certain Middle East States. At the conclusion of the programme's first phase, UNODC issued two detailed reports that provide a useful inventory of the technical assistance needs of States of the region, as well as a compilation of good practices for addressing the threat posed by such fighters.

B. Criminal justice and legislation

76. Prosecutors are increasingly required to collaborate both with private communications service providers, international institutions and the prosecution authorities of other States. In its efforts to assist States to bring terrorists to justice and to support international cooperation in criminal matters, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate joined forces with the Institute for Security Studies and the International Association of Prosecutors to develop, under the auspices of the Association, a counter-terrorism prosecutors network. The network will bring together prosecutors from 173 jurisdictions and enable them to cooperate with each other and to learn from each other's experiences in handling the complexities of counter-terrorism prosecutions.

C. Countering the financing of terrorism

77. Members of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Working Group on Countering the Financing of Terrorism have been actively engaged in providing training in asset-freezing and dealing with kidnapping for ransom. On asset-freezing, the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force/United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre has developed a capacity-building project aimed at enhancing the implementation of the provisions contained in resolutions 1373

(2001), 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) through, inter alia, the provision of training and advice to Member States.

78. UNODC has organized workshops in the Middle East and North Africa region on freezing the assets of listed terrorists in accordance with the United Nations sanctions regime. In April 2016, UNODC and the Iraqi authorities reviewed the country's draft counter-terrorism law (pending in parliament since 2011) and its recent draft law on terrorist asset-freezing. The revisions also follow the priority technical assistance needs identified during the assessment visit of the Counter-Terrorism Committee to Iraq in September 2015.

79. The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre launched a project on building capacity to prevent terrorists from benefiting from ransom payments by building the capacity of States and relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to achieve the safe return of hostages without granting the payment of ransoms or substantive political concessions in the process. The Centre also organized a regional conference in Nairobi in March, which was attended by NGOs, financial institutions and representatives of the insurance and media sectors, to discuss capacity-building needs in addressing and preventing kidnapping for ransom in Africa.

80. On 14 April 2016, the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, together with the Financial Action Task Force, held a joint open briefing at United Nations Headquarters to highlight tactics and good practices in depriving terrorist groups of funding sources.

D. Law enforcement and border control

81. The Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the Swiss non-governmental organization ICT4Peace launched a joint project on private sector engagement in responding to the use by terrorists of ICT. The launch event was attended by representatives from the ICT industry and the private sector, United Nations counter-terrorism and human rights entities, European Union Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, the Europol Internet Referral Unit and think tanks.

82. Under this project, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and ICT4Peace will work with the private sector and civil society to deepen the understanding of current industry responses to the use by terrorists of their products and services, particularly with regard to content, and identify good practices. The ultimate objective of the project is to establish a forum through which these same practices and experiences can be discussed and shared with a greater number of actors. To attain that objective, a series of workshops will be held over the next few months in Europe, Asia and the Americas with the aim of engaging industry and civil society actors.

83. As part of United Nations efforts to increase the use by States of advance passenger information systems, two of five regional workshops aimed at raising awareness and building capacity on the issue were held in Bangkok in March 2016 for South and South-East Asian States, and in Amman in May 2016 for States of the Middle East and North Africa region. The events were organized by the Counter-

Terrorism Implementation Task Force/United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, in close cooperation with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, and with the participation of the International Air Transport Association, the International Civil Aviation Organization, INTERPOL and the International Organization for Migration. All invited States recognized the need to implement advance passenger information systems pursuant to resolution 2178 (2014) and that States with low capacities would benefit from United Nations support.

84. The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre is also working with the Global Counterterrorism Forum on a joint border security initiative (initially focused on the Sahel and the Horn of Africa), which involves the gathering and dissemination of good practices on border security and management and border surveillance; and a determination of the capacity of States to apply them and to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters. The first and second regional workshops of the project were held in December 2014 and May 2015, respectively.

E. Countering recruitment and preventing/countering violent extremism

85. Together with the Government of Switzerland, I co-hosted the Geneva Conference on the theme "Preventing violent extremism: the way forward" on 7 and 8 April 2016. The Conference was attended by 745 participants from 125 Member States, 23 international and regional organizations, 26 United Nations entities, and 67 civil society organizations and private companies.

86. The discussions provided a valuable opportunity for Member States, international and regional organizations and civil society to share perspectives, experience and best practices on key issues related to the prevention of violent extremism. The Conference also provided a valuable forum for further consideration of my Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (see A/70/674), which the General Assembly will consider in the context of the fifth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy to be held on 30 June and 1 July.

F. Addressing conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism

87. The Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Working Group on Addressing Conditions Conducive to the Spread of Terrorism is working to strengthen capacities and raise awareness in the areas of youth, communications and education. The Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate continued to support the capacity of Member States to address the conditions conducive to terrorism as part of comprehensive national counter-incitement strategies, during workshops and within the framework of its constructive dialogue with Government officials and civil society representatives. UNODC and Hedayah hosted a regional conference in Abu Dhabi to explore the process of developing and implementing an effective preventative criminal justice strategy against radicalization and violent extremism related to the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters, including the development of national strategies for countering and preventing violent extremism.

88. The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations supports youth-led civil society groups impacting hundreds of thousands of people. Media/computer games

promoting peace have been developed and distributed. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization organized a conference and follow-up mechanisms on the role of the Internet in radicalization and recruitment. In terms of communications, the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat provided coverage of activities aimed at combating terrorism and violent extremism and disseminated programming in various languages, including through United Nations Radio, United Nations Web TV and social media. In support of refugees and other forcibly displaced people, including children and youth, and in an effort to minimize the risk of extremism and radicalization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees provides access to resources and services and the realistic prospect of enjoying rights such as education, health care and employment.

G. Protecting human rights while countering terrorism

89. Members of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Working Group on Protecting and Promoting Human Rights and the Rule of Law while Countering Terrorism have continued to implement the project focusing on the training and capacity-building of law enforcement officials with regard to human rights, the rule of law and the prevention of terrorism, in coordination with partner Member States in the Middle East and North and West Africa. Partner States are in the process of identifying lessons learned and good practices from the training and are in a better position to adjust their counter-terrorism policies and practices so as to better demonstrate compliance with international human rights law, thus contributing to sustainable and systemic changes in behaviour. The Basic Human Rights Reference Guide series of the Working Group continued to provide Member States with guidance to implement changes in policy and practice on key areas such as detention, fair trials and national counter-terrorism legislation.

H. United Nations bodies and field missions

90. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) has prepared assessment reports on ISIL, which it shares with Member States to support their efforts to counter the threat of ISIL. UNSMIL continues to support the efforts of the Presidency Council in leading Libya's transition and the establishment of the Government of National Accord to curtail further expansion of ISIL.

91. The Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and UNAMI are working closely together to set up a coordination mechanism to address the priority technical assistance needs identified with Iraq during the Counter-Terrorism Committee's September 2015 assessment visit to the country. The priority technical assistance recommendations are intended to enhance the capacities of Iraq in areas related to legislation, finance, law enforcement and border control. Several assistance providers, including Member States and United Nations entities and partner international and regional organizations, are currently being approached by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate with a view to facilitating the delivery of technical assistance to Iraq.